

LETTERS
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
MIND,
ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.

I CONSIDER AN HUMAN SOUL WITHOUT EDUCATION, LIKE MARBLE IN THE QUARRY, WHICH SHEWS NONE OF ITS INHERENT BEAUTIES TILL THE SKILL OF THE POLISHER FETCHES OUT THE COLOURS, MAKES THE SURFACE SHINE, AND DISCOVERS EVERY ORNAMENTAL CLOUD, SPOT, AND VEIN THAT RUNS THROUGH THE BODY OF IT. EDUCATION, AFTER THE SAME MANNER, WHEN IT WORKS UPON A NOBLE MIND, DRAWS OUT TO VIEW EVERY LATENT VIRTUE AND PERFECTION, WHICH WITHOUT SUCH HELPS ARE NEVER ABLE TO MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE.

ADDISON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By Mrs. CHAPONE.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WALTER,
at Homer's-Head, Charing-Crofs;
And E. and C. DILLY, in the Poaltry.

MDCCLXXV.



TO
Mrs. MONTAGU.

MADAM,

I BELIEVE, you are persuaded that I never entertained a thought of appearing in public, when the desire of being useful to one dear child, in whom I take the tenderest interest, induced me to write the following Letters :—perhaps it was the partiality of friendship, which so far biaſſed your judg-

A 2

ment

iv DEDICATION.

ment as to make you think them capable of being more extensively useful, and warmly to recommend the publication of them. Though this partiality could alone prevent your judgment from being considered as decisive in favour of the work, it is more flattering to the writer than any literary fame; if, however, you will allow me to add, that some strokes of your elegant pen have corrected these Letters, I may hope, they will
be

DEDICATION. v

be received with an attention, which will ensure a candid judgment from the reader, and perhaps will enable them to make some useful impressions on those, to whom they are now particularly offered.

They only, who know how your hours are employed, and of what important value they are to the good and happiness of individuals, as well as to the delight and improvement of the public, can justly estimate my obli-

vi DEDICATION.

obligation to you for the time
and consideration you have be-
stowed on this little work. As
you have drawn it forth, I may
claim a sort of right to the
ornament and protection of your
name, and to the privilege of
publicly professing myself, with
the highest esteem,

MADAM,

your much obliged friend,

and most obedient

humble servant,

HESTER CHAPONE.

C O N T E N T S.

V O L. I.

LET. I. *On the First Principles of Religion.*

II. { *On the Study of the holy*
III. { *Scriptures.*

IV. { *On the Regulation of the*
V. { *Heart and Affections.*

V O L.

viii CONTENTS.

VOL. II.

LET. VI. *On the Government of the
Temper.*

VII. *On Economy.*

VIII. *On Politeness and Accom-
plishments.*

IX. *On Geography and Chro-
nology.*

X. *On the Manner and Course
of reading History.*

Conclusion.

LETTER I.

MY DEAREST NIECE,

THOUGH you are so happy as to have parents, who are both capable and desirous of giving you all proper instruction, yet I, who love you so tenderly, cannot help fondly wishing to contribute something, if possible, to your improvement and welfare: And, as I am so far separated from you, that

VOL. I.

B

it

2 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

it is only by pen and ink I can offer you my sentiments, I will hope that your attention may be engaged, by seeing on paper, from the hand of one of your warmest friends, Truths of the highest importance, which, though you may not find new, can never be too deeply engraven on your mind. Some of them perhaps may make no great impression at present, and yet may so far gain a place in your memory as readily to return to your thoughts when occasion recalls them. And, if you pay me the compliment of preserving my letters, you may possibly re-peruse them at some future period, when concurring circumstances may
give

give them additional weight;—and thus they may prove more effectual than the same things spoken in conversation. But, however this may prove, I cannot resist the desire of trying to be in some degree useful to you, on your setting out in a life of trial and difficulty; your success in which must determine your fate for ever.

Hitherto you have “thought as
“ a child, and understood as a
“ child;” but it is time “to put
“ away childish things.”—You are now in your fifteenth year, and must soon act for yourself; therefore it is high time to store your mind with

4 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

those principles, which must direct your conduct, and fix your character. If you desire to live in peace and honour, in favour with God and man, and to die in the glorious hope of rising from the grave to a life of endless happiness—if these things appear worthy your ambition, you must set out in earnest in the pursuit of them. Virtue and happiness are not attained by chance, nor by a cold and languid approbation; they must be fought with ardour, attended to with diligence, and every assistance must be eagerly embraced that may enable you to obtain them. Consider, that good and evil are now before
you,

On the First Principles of Religion. 5

you, that, if you do not heartily choose and love the one, you must undoubtedly be the wretched victim of the other. Your trial is now begun ; you must either become one of the glorious *children* of *God*, who are to rejoice in his love for ever, or a *child* of *destruction*—miserable in this life, and punished with eternal death hereafter. Surely, you will be impressed by so awful a situation ! you will earnestly pray to be directed into that road of life, which leads to excellence and happiness ; and, you will be thankful to every kind hand that is held out, to set you forward in your journey.

6 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

The first step must be to awaken your mind to a sense of the importance of the task before you; which is no less than to bring your frail nature to that degree of Christian perfection, which is to qualify it for immortality, and, without which, it is necessarily incapable of happiness; for, it is a truth never to be forgotten, that God has annexed happiness to virtue, and misery to vice, by the unchangeable nature of things; and that, a wicked being (while he continues such) is in a natural incapacity of enjoying happiness, even with the concurrence of all those outward circumstances, which in a virtuous mind would produce it.

On the First Principles of Religion. 7

As there are degrees of virtue and vice, so are there of reward and punishment, both here and hereafter: But, let not my dearest Niece aim only at escaping the dreadful doom of the wicked—let your desires take a nobler flight, and aspire after those transcendent honours, and that brighter crown of glory, which await those who have excelled in virtue; and, let the animating thought, that every secret effort to gain his favour is noted by your all-seeing judge, who will, with infinite goodness, proportion your reward to your labours, excite every faculty of your soul to please and serve him. To this end,

8 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

you must *inform your understanding* what you ought to *believe*, and to *do*. — You must *correct* and *purify* your *heart*; cherish and improve all its good affections; and continually mortify and subdue those that are evil. — You must *form* and *govern* your *temper* and *manners*, according to the laws of benevolence and justice; and qualify yourself, by all means in your power, for an *useful* and *agreeable* member of society. All this you see is no light business, nor can it be performed without a sincere and earnest application of the mind, as to its great and constant object. When once you consider life, and the duties of
life,

On the First Principles of Religion. 9

life, in this manner, you will listen eagerly to the voice of instruction and admonition, and seize every opportunity of improvement; every useful hint will be laid up in your heart, and your chief delight will be in those persons, and those books, from which you can learn true wisdom.

The only sure foundation of human virtue is Religion, and the foundation and first principle of religion is the belief of the one only God, and a just sense of his attributes. This you will think you have learn'd long since, and possess in common with almost every human creature
in

10 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

in this enlightened age and nation ; but, believe me, it is less common than you imagine, to believe in the true God—that is, to form such a notion of the Deity as is agreeable to truth, and consistent with those infinite perfections, which all profess to ascribe to him. To form worthy notions of the supreme Being, as far as we are capable, is essential to true religion and morality ; for as it is our duty to imitate those qualities of the Divinity, which are imitable by us, so is it necessary we should know what they are, and fatal to mistake them. Can those, who think of God with servile dread and terror, as of a gloomy tyrant, armed with

On the First Principles of Religion. 11

with almighty power to torment and destroy them, be said to believe in the true God?—in that God who, the scriptures say, is love?—The kindest and best of Beings, who made all creatures in bountiful goodness, that he might communicate to them some portion of his own unalterable happiness!—who condescends to stile himself our Father! and, who pitieth us, as a father pitieth his own children!—Can those who expect to please God by cruelty to themselves, or to their fellow-creatures—by horrid punishments of their own bodies for the sin of their souls—or, by more horrid persecution of others for difference of opinion,

12 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

opinion, be called true believers? Have they not set up another God in their own minds, who rather resembles the worst of beings than the best?—Nor do those act on surer principles who think to gain the favour of God by senseless enthusiasm and frantic raptures, more like the wild excesses of the most depraved human love, than that reasonable adoration, that holy reverential love, which is due to the pure and holy Father of the universe. Those likewise, who murmur against his providence and repine under the restraint of his commands, cannot firmly believe him infinitely wise and good. If we are
not

On the First Principles of Religion. 13

not disposed to trust him for future events, to banish fruitless anxiety, and to believe that all things work together for good to those that love him, surely we do not really believe in the God of mercy and truth. If we wish to avoid all remembrance of him, all communion with him, as much as we dare, surely we do not believe him to be the source of joy and comfort, the dispenser of all good.

How lamentable it is, that so few hearts should feel the pleasures of real piety!—that prayer and thanksgiving should be performed, as they too often are,
not

14 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

not with joy, and love, and gratitude; but, with cold indifference, melancholy dejection, or secret horror!—it is true, we are all such frail and sinful creatures, that we justly fear to have offended our gracious father; but, let us remember the condition of his forgiveness: If you have sinned—“sin no more.” He is ready to receive you whenever you sincerely turn to him—and, he is ready to assist you, when you do but desire to obey him. Let your devotion then be the language of filial love and gratitude; confide to this kindest of fathers every want, and every wish of your heart;—but submit them all to his will, and
freely

On the First Principles of Religion. 15

freely offer him the disposal of yourself, and of all your affairs. Thank him for his benefits, and even for his punishments — convinced that these also are benefits, and mercifully designed for your good. Implore his direction in all difficulties; his assistance in all trials; his comfort and support in sickness or affliction; his restraining grace in the time of prosperity and joy. Do not persist in desiring what his providence denies you; but be assured it is not good for you. Refuse not any thing he allots you, but embrace it as the best and properest for you. Can you do less to your heavenly Father than what your duty

16 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

duty to an earthly one requires?—If you were to ask permission of your father, to do, or to have any thing you desire, and he should refuse it to you, would you obstinately persist in setting your heart upon it, notwithstanding his prohibition? would you not rather say, My father is wiser than I am; he loves me, and would not deny my request, if it was fit to be granted; I will therefore banish the thought, and cheerfully acquiesce in his will?—How much rather should this be said of our heavenly Father, whose wisdom cannot be mistaken, and whose bountiful kindness is infinite!—Love him there-

fore in the same manner you love your earthly parents, but in a much higher degree—in the highest your nature is capable of. Forget not to dedicate yourself to his service every day; to implore his forgiveness of your faults, and his protection from evil, every night: and this not merely in formal words, unaccompanied by any act of the mind, but “in spirit and in truth;” in grateful love, and humble adoration. Nor let these stated periods of worship be your only communication with him; accustom yourself to think often of him, in all your waking hours;—to contemplate his wisdom and power, in the works of

18 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

his hands — to acknowledge his goodness in every object of use or of pleasure—to delight in giving him praise in your inmost heart, in the midst of every innocent gratification—in the liveliest hour of social enjoyment. You cannot conceive, if you have not experienced, how much such silent acts of gratitude and love will enhance every pleasure; nor what sweet serenity and cheerfulness such reflections will diffuse over your mind. On the other hand, when you are suffering pain or sorrow, when you are confined to an unpleasant situation, or engaged in a painful duty, how will it support and animate you,
to

On the First Principles of Religion. 19

to refer yourself to your almighty Father! — to be assured that he knows your state and your intentions; that no effort of virtue is lost in his sight, nor the least of your actions or sufferings disregarded or forgotten! — that his hand is ever over you, to ward off every real evil, which is not the effect of your own ill conduct, and to relieve every suffering that is not useful to your future well-being!

You see, my dear, that true devotion is not a melancholy sentiment that depresses the spirits, and excludes the ideas of pleasure, which youth is so fond of: on the

20 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

contrary, there is nothing so friendly to joy, so productive of true pleasure, so peculiarly suited to the warmth and innocence of a youthful heart. Do not therefore think it too soon to turn your mind to God; but offer him the first fruits of your understanding and affections: and be assured, that the more you increase in love to him, and delight in his laws, the more you will increase in happiness, in excellence, and honour:—that, in proportion as you improve in true piety, you will become dear and amiable to your fellow creatures; contented and peaceful in yourself; and qualified to enjoy the best blessings of this life,

life, as well as to inherit the glorious promise of immortality.

Thus far I have spoken of the first principles of all religion: namely, belief in God, worthy notions of his attributes, and suitable affections towards him—which will naturally excite a sincere desire of obedience. But, before you can obey his will, you must know what that will is; you must enquire in what manner he has declared it, and where you may find those laws, which must be the rule of your actions.

The great laws of morality are indeed written in our hearts, and

22 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

may be discovered by reason ; but our reason is of slow growth ; very unequally dispensed to different persons ; liable to error, and confined within very narrow limits in all. If, therefore, God has vouchsafed to grant a particular revelation of his will—if he has been so unspeakably gracious, as to send his son into the world to reclaim mankind from error and wickedness—to die for our sins—and to teach us the way to eternal life — surely it becomes us to receive his precepts with the deepest reverence ; to love and prize them above all things ; and to study them constantly, with an earnest desire to conform our thoughts,

thoughts, our words, and actions to them.

As you advance in years and understanding, I hope you will be able to examine for yourself the evidences of the Christian religion, and be convinced, on rational grounds, of its divine authority. At present, such enquiries would demand more study, and greater powers of reasoning, than your age admits of. It is your part therefore, till you are capable of understanding the proofs, to believe your parents and teachers, that the holy scriptures are writings inspired by God, containing a true history of facts, in which we are deeply concerned—a true recital of

24 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

the laws given by God to Moses, and of the precepts of our blessed Lord and Saviour, delivered from his own mouth to his disciples, and repeated and enlarged upon in the edifying epistles of his Apostles—who were men chosen from amongst those, who had the advantage of conversing with our Lord, to bear witness of his miracles and resurrection—and who, after his ascension, were assisted and inspired by the Holy Ghost. This sacred volume must be the rule of your life. In it you will find all truths necessary to be believed; and plain and easy directions, for the practice of every duty: Your Bible then must

must be your chief study and delight : but, as it contains many various kinds of writing—some parts obscure and difficult of interpretation, others plain and intelligible to the meanest capacity—I would chiefly recommend to your frequent perusal such parts of the sacred writings as are most adapted to your understanding, and most necessary for your instruction. Our Saviour's precepts were spoken to the common people amongst the Jews ; and were therefore given in a manner easy to be understood, and equally striking and instructive to the learned and unlearned : for the most ignorant may comprehend them, whilst

26 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

whilst the wisest must be charmed and awed, by the beautiful and majestic simplicity with which they are expressed. Of the same kind are the Ten Commandments, delivered by God to Moses ; which, as they were designed for universal laws, are worded in the most concise and simple manner, yet with a majesty, which commands our utmost reverence.

I think you will receive great pleasure, as well as improvement, from the historical books of the Old Testament—provided you read them as an history, in a regular course, and keep the thread of it in
your

your mind, as you go on. I know of none, true or fictitious, that is equally wonderful, interesting, and affecting; or that is told in so short and simple a manner as this, which is, of all histories, the most authentic.

In my next letter, I will give you some brief directions, concerning the method and course I wish you to pursue, in reading the holy scriptures. May you be enabled to make the best use of this most precious gift of God—this sacred treasury of knowledge! May you read the Bible, not as a task, nor as the dull employment of that day only

4 in

28 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

in which you are forbidden more lively entertainments—but, with a sincere and ardent desire of instruction ; with that love and delight in God's word, which the holy Psalmist so pathetically felt, and described, and which is the natural consequence of loving God and virtue!—Though I speak this of the Bible in general, I would not be understood to mean, that every part of the volume is equally interesting. I have already said, that it consists of various matter, and various kinds of books, which must be read with different views and sentiments. The having some general notion of what you are to expect from each book may

On the First Principles of Religion. 29

may possibly help you to understand them, and heighten your relish of them. I shall treat you as if you were perfectly new to the whole; for so I wish you to consider yourself, because the time and manner, in which children usually read the Bible, are very ill calculated to make them really acquainted with it; and too many people who have read it thus, without understanding it in their youth, satisfy themselves that they know enough of it, and never afterwards study it with attention, when they come to a maturer age.

Adieu, my beloved Niece! If the

feelings

30 *On the First Principles of Religion.*

feelings of your heart, whilst you read my letters, correspond with those of mine, whilst I write them, I shall not be without the advantage of your partial affection, to give weight to my advice; for believe me, my own dear girl, my heart and eyes overflow with tenderness, while I tell you, with how warm and earnest prayers for your happiness here, and hereafter, I subscribe myself,

your faithful friend

and most affectionate Aunt.

LETTER II.

INOW proceed to give my dear niece some short sketches of the matter contained in the different books of the Bible, and of the course in which they ought to be read.

The first book, GENESIS, contains the most grand, and, to us, the most interesting events, that ever happened in the universe :—The creation of the world, and of man :—The deplorable fall of man, from his first state of excellence and bliss,

to

32 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

to the distressed condition in which we see all his descendants continue :
—The sentence of death pronounced on Adam, and on all his race—with the reviving promise of that deliverance, which has since been wrought for us by our blessed Saviour:—The account of the early state of the world:—Of the universal deluge:—The division of mankind into different nations and languages:—The story of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people ; whose unshaken faith and obedience, under the severest trial human nature could sustain, obtained such favour in the sight of God, that he vouchsafed to stile him his friend, and
promised

promised to make of his posterity a great nation ; and that in his seed—that is in one of his descendants—all the kingdoms of the earth should be blessed: this, you will easily see, refers to the Messiah, who was to be the blessing and deliverance of all nations. It is amazing that the Jews, possessing this prophecy among many others, should have been so blinded by prejudice, as to have expected, from this great personage, only a temporal deliverance of their own nation from the subjection to which they were reduced under the Romans: it is equally amazing, that some Christians should, even now, confine the blessed effects of

34 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

his appearance upon earth, to this or that particular sect or profession, when he is so clearly and emphatically described as the Saviour of the whole world.—The story of Abraham's proceeding to sacrifice his only son at the command of God, is affecting in the highest degree, and sets forth a pattern of unlimited resignation, that every one ought to imitate, in those trials of obedience under temptation, or of acquiescence under afflicting dispensations, which fall to their lot: of this we may be assured, that our trials will be always proportioned to the powers afforded us: If we have not Abraham's strength of mind, neither

ther shall we be called upon to lift the bloody knife against the bosom of an only child; but, if the almighty arm should be lifted up against him, we must be ready to resign him, and all we hold dear, to the divine will.—This action of Abraham has been censured by some, who do not attend to the distinction between obedience to a special command, and the detestably cruel sacrifices of the Heathens, who sometimes voluntarily, and without any divine injunctions, offered up their own children, under the notion of appeasing the anger of their gods. An absolute command from God himself—as in the case of Abra-

36 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

ham—entirely alters the moral nature of the action; since he, and he only, has a perfect right over the lives of his creatures, and may appoint whom he will, either angel or man, to be his instrument of destruction. That it was really the voice of God, which pronounced the command, and not a delusion, might be made certain to Abraham's mind, by means we do not comprehend, but which we know to be within the power of *him* who made our souls as well as bodies, and who can controul and direct every faculty of the human mind: and we may be assured, that if he was pleased to reveal himself so miraculously,

lously, he would not leave a possibility of doubting whether it was a real or an imaginary revelation: thus the sacrifice of Abraham appears to be clear of all superstition, and remains the noblest instance of religious faith and submission that was ever given by a mere man: we cannot wonder that the blessings bestowed on him for it should have been extended to his posterity.— This book proceeds with the history of Isaac, which becomes very interesting to us, from the touching scene I have mentioned—and still more so, if we consider him as the type of our Saviour: it recounts his marriage with Rebecca—

38 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

the birth and history of his two sons, Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, and Esau, the father of the Edomites or Idumeans — the exquisitely affecting story of Joseph and his brethren—and of his transplanting the Israelites into Egypt, who there multiplied to a great nation.

In EXODUS, you read of a series of wonders, wrought by the Almighty, to rescue the oppressed Israelites from the cruel tyranny of the Egyptians, who, having first received them as guests, by degrees reduced them to a state of slavery. By the most peculiar mercies and exertions

in their favour, God prepared his chosen people to receive, with reverent and obedient hearts, the solemn restitution of those primitive laws, which probably he had revealed to Adam and his immediate descendants, or which, at least, he had made known by the dictates of conscience, but which, time, and the degeneracy of mankind, had much obscured. This important revelation was made to them in the Wilderness of Sinah: there, assembled before the burning mountain, surrounded “with blackness, and “darkness, and tempest,” they heard the awful voice of God pronounce the eternal law, impressing

40 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

it on their hearts, with circumstances of terror, but without those encouragements and those excellent promises, which were afterwards offered to mankind by Jesus Christ. Thus were the great laws of morality restored to the Jews, and through them transmitted to other nations; and by that means a great restraint was opposed to the torrent of vice and impiety, which began to prevail over the world.

To those moral precepts, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, were superadded, by the ministration of Moses, many peculiar institutions, wisely adapted to different

different ends—either, to fix the memory of those past deliverances which were figurative of a future and far greater salvation—to place inviolable barriers between the Jews and the idolatrous nations, by whom they were surrounded—or, to be the civil law, by which the community was to be governed.

To conduct this series of events, and to establish these laws with his people, God raised up that great prophet Moses, whose faith and piety enabled him to undertake and execute the most arduous enterprises, and to pursue, with unabated zeal, the welfare of his countrymen ;

42 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

trymen ; even in the hour of death, this generous ardour still prevailed : his last moments were employed in fervent prayers for their prosperity, and, in rapturous gratitude, for the glimpse vouchsafed him of a Saviour, far greater than himself, whom God would one day raise up to his people.

Thus did Moses, by the excellency of his faith, obtain a glorious pre-eminence among the saints and prophets in heaven ; while, on earth, he will be ever revered, as the first of those benefactors to mankind, whose labours for the public good have

have endeared their memory to all ages.

The next book is **LEVITICUS**, which contains little besides the laws for the peculiar ritual observance of the Jews, and therefore affords no great instruction to us now; you may pass it over entirely:—and, for the same reason, you may omit the first eight chapters of **NUMBERS**. The rest of Numbers is chiefly a continuation of the history, with some ritual laws.

In **DEUTERONOMY**, Moses makes a recapitulation of the foregoing history, with zealous exhortations to
the

44 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

the people, faithfully to worship and obey that God, who had worked such amazing wonders for them: he promises them the noblest temporal blessings, if they prove obedient, and adds the most awful and striking denunciations against them, if they rebel, or forsake the true God. I have before observed, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were *temporal* rewards and punishments, those of the New Testament are *eternal*: These last, as they are so infinitely more forcible than the first, were reserved for the last, best gift to mankind—and were revealed by the Messiah, in the fullest and clearest manner. Moses, in this
book,

book, directs the method in which the Israelites were to deal with the seven nations, whom they were appointed to punish for their profligacy and idolatry; and whose land they were to possess, when they had driven out the old inhabitants. He gives them excellent laws, civil as well as religious, which were ever after the standing municipal laws of that people.—This book concludes with Moses' song and death.

The book of JOSHUA contains the conquests of the Israelites over the seven nations, and their establishment in the promised land.—Their treatment of these conquered nations

46 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

tions must appear to you very cruel and unjust, if you consider it as their own act, unauthorized by a positive command : but they had the most absolute injunctions, not to spare these corrupt people — “ to
“ make no covenant with them,
“ nor shew mercy to them, but
“ utterly to destroy them.” And the reason is given — “ lest they
“ should turn away the Israelites
“ from following the Lord, that
“ they might serve other Gods*.” The children of Israel are to be considered as instruments in the hand of the Lord, to punish those,

* Deut. chap. ii.

whose

whose idolatry and wickedness had deservedly brought destruction on them: this example, therefore, cannot be pleaded in behalf of cruelty, or bring any imputation on the character of the Jews. With regard to other cities, which did not belong to these seven nations, they were directed to deal with them, according to the common law of arms at that time. If the city submitted, it became tributary, and the people were spared; if it resisted, the men were to be slain, but the women and children saved *. Yet, though the crime of cruelty cannot be justly

* Deut. chap. xx.

48 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

laid to their charge on this occasion, you will observe in the course of their history, many things recorded of them, very different from what you would expect from the chosen people of God, if you supposed them selected on account of their own merit : their national character was by no means amiable ; and, we are repeatedly told, that they were not chosen for their superior righteousness — “ for they were a
“ stiffnecked people, and provoked
“ the Lord with their rebellions
“ from the day they left Egypt.” —
“ You have been rebellious against
“ the Lord, says Moses, from the
“ day

“ day that I knew you *.”—And he vehemently exhorts them, not to flatter themselves that their success was, in any degree, owing to their own merits. They were appointed to be the scourge of other nations, whose crimes rendered them fit objects of divine chastisement. For the sake of righteous Abraham, their founder, and perhaps for many other wise reasons, undiscovered to us, they were selected from a world over-run with idolatry, to preserve upon earth the pure worship of the one only God, and to be honoured with the birth

* Deut. chap. ix. ver. 24.

50 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

of the Messiah amongst them. For this end, they were precluded by divine command, from mixing with any other people, and defended by a great number of peculiar rites and observances, from falling into the corrupt worship practised by their neighbours.

The book of JUDGES, in which you will find the affecting stories of Sampson and of Jephtha, carries on the history from the death of Joshua, about two hundred and fifty years; but, the facts are not told in the times in which they happened, which makes some confusion; and it will be necessary to consult the

mar-

marginal dates and notes, as well as the index, in order to get any clear idea of the succession of events, during that period.

The history then proceeds regularly through the two books of SAMUEL, and those of KINGS: nothing can be more interesting and entertaining than the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon: but, after the death of Solomon, when ten tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam, and became a separate kingdom, you will find some difficulty in understanding distinctly the histories of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which are blended together.

52 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

gether, and, by the likeness of the names, and other particulars, will be apt to confound your mind, without great attention to the different threads thus carried on together : The Index here will be of great use to you. The second book of Kings concludes with the Babylonish captivity, 588 years before Christ—till which time, the kingdom of Judah had descended uninterruptedly in the line of David.

The first book of CHRONICLES begins with a genealogy from Adam, through all the tribes of Israel and Judah ; and the remainder is the same history, which is contained
in

in the books of Kings, with little or no variation, till the separation of the ten tribes : From that period, it proceeds with the history of the kingdom of Judah alone, and gives therefore a more regular and clear account of the affairs of Judah than the book of Kings. You may pass over the first book of Chronicles, and the nine first chapters of the second book : but, by all means, read the remaining chapters, as they will give you more clear and distinct ideas of the history of Judah than that you read in the second book of Kings. The second of Chronicles ends, like the second of

54 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

Kings, with the Babylonish captivity.

You must pursue the history in the book of EZRA, which gives an account of the return of some of the Jews, on the edict of Cyrus, and of the rebuilding the Lord's temple.

NEHEMIAH carries on the history, for about twelve years, when he himself was governor of Jerusalem, with authority to rebuild the walls, &c.

The story of ESTHER is prior in time to that of Ezra and Nehemiah ; as you will see by the marginal

ginal dates ; however, as it happened during the seventy years captivity, and is a kind of episode, it may be read in its own place.

This is the last of the canonical books that is properly historical ; and I would therefore advise, that you pass over what follows, till you have continued the history through the apocryphal books.

The story of Job is probably very ancient, though that is a point upon which learned men have differed : It is dated, however, 1520 years before Christ : I believe it is uncertain by whom it was written :

56 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

many parts of it are obscure, but it is well worth studying, for the extreme beauty of the poetry, and for the noble and sublime devotion it contains. The subject of the dispute, between Job and his pretended friends, seems to be, whether the providence of God distributes the rewards and punishments of this life, in exact proportion to the merit or demerit of each individual. His antagonists suppose that it does; and therefore infer from Job's uncommon calamities, that, notwithstanding his apparent righteousness, he was in reality a grievous sinner: They aggravate his supposed guilt, by the imputation

tion of hypocrisy, and call upon him to confess it, and to acknowledge the justice of his punishment. Job asserts his own innocence and virtue in the most pathetic manner, yet does not presume to accuse the supreme Being of injustice. Elihu attempts to arbitrate the matter, by alledging the impossibility that so frail and ignorant a creature as man should comprehend the ways of the Almighty, and, therefore, condemns the unjust and cruel inference the three friends had drawn from the sufferings of Job. He also blames Job for the presumption of acquitting himself of all iniquity, since the best of men are not
pure

58 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

pure in the sight of God—but all have something to repent of; and he advises him to make this use of his afflictions. At last, by a bold figure of poetry, the supreme Being himself is introduced, speaking from the whirlwind, and silencing them all by the most sublime display of his own power, magnificence, and wisdom, and of the comparative littleness and ignorance of man.— This indeed is the only conclusion of the argument which could be drawn, at a time when life and immortality were not yet brought to light. A future retribution is the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty

ficulty arising from the sufferings of good people in this life.

Next follow THE PSALMS, with which you cannot be too conversant. If you have any taste, either for poetry or devotion, they will be your delight, and will afford you a continual feast. The Bible translation is far better than that used in the Common-prayer Book ; and will often give you the sense, when the other is obscure. In this, as well as in all other parts of the scripture, you must be careful always to consult the margin, which gives you the corrections made since the last translation, and is generally preferable

60 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

able to the words of the text. I would wish you to select some of the Psalms that please you best, and get them by heart; or, at least, make yourself mistress of the sentiments contained in them: Dr. Delany's Life of David will shew you the occasions on which several of them were composed, which add much to their beauty and propriety, and by comparing them with the events of David's life, you will greatly enhance your pleasure in them. Never did the spirit of true piety breathe more strongly than in these divine songs; which, being added to a rich vein of poetry, makes them more captivating to my heart

On the Study of the holy Scriptures. 61

heart and imagination than any thing I ever read. You will consider how great disadvantages any poem must sustain from being rendered literally into prose, and then imagine how beautiful these must be in the original. May you be enabled, by reading them frequently, to transfuse into your own breast that holy flame which inspired the writer!—To delight in the Lord, and in his laws, like the Psalmist—to rejoice in him always, and to think “one day in his courts
“ better than a thousand!”—But, may you escape the heart-piercing sorrow of such repentance as that of David — by avoiding sin, which humbled

humbled this unhappy king to the dust—and which cost him such bitter anguish, as it is impossible to read of without being moved. Not all the pleasures of the most prosperous sinner could counterbalance the hundredth part of those sensations, described in his penitential Psalms—and which must be the portion of every man, who has fallen from a religious state into such crimes, when once he recovers a sense of religion and virtue, and is brought to a real hatred of sin: however available such repentance may be to the safety and happiness of the soul after death, it is a state of such exquisite suffering here, that one
cannot

cannot be enough surprised at the folly of those, who indulge in sin, with the hope of living to make their peace with God, by repentance. Happy are they who preserve their innocence unsullied by any great or wilful crimes, and who have only the common failings of humanity to repent of; these are sufficiently mortifying to a heart deeply smitten with the love of virtue and with the desire of perfection.

—There are many very striking prophecies of the Messiah, in these divine songs; particularly in Psalm xxii. such may be found scattered up and down almost throughout the Old Testament. To bear testi-

64 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

mony to *him* is the great and ultimate end, for which the spirit of prophecy was bestowed on the sacred writers:—but, this will appear more plainly to you, when you enter on the study of prophecy, which you are now much too young to undertake.

The PROVERBS and ECCLESIASTES are rich stores of wisdom ; from which, I wish you to adopt such maxims as may be of infinite use, both to your temporal and eternal interest. But, detached sentences are a kind of reading not proper to be continued long at a time ; a few of them well chosen
and

On the Study of the holy Scriptures. 65
and digested, will do you much more service, than to read half a dozen chapters together; in this respect they are directly opposite to the historical books, which, if not read in continuation, can hardly be understood, or retained to any purpose.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON is a fine poem—but its mystical reference to religion lies too deep for a common understanding: if you read it therefore, it will be rather as matter of curiosity than of edification.

Next follow the PROPHECIES,
which though highly deserving the
VOL. I. F greatest

66 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

greatest attention and study, I think you had better omit for some years, and then read them with a good exposition; as they are much too difficult for you to understand, without assistance. Dr. Newton on the Prophecies will help you much, whenever you undertake this study—which, you should by all means do, when your understanding is ripe enough; because one of the main proofs of our religion rests on the testimony of the prophecies; and they are very frequently quoted, and referred to, in the New Testament: besides, the sublimity of the language and sentiments, through all the disadvantages of antiquity and translation, must, in
6 very

On the Study of the holy Scriptures. 67
very many passages, strike every person of taste; and the excellent moral and religious precepts found in them must be useful to all.

Though I have spoken of these books, in the order in which they stand, I repeat that they are not to be read in that order—but that the thread of the history is to be pursued, from Nehemiah, to the first book of the MACCABEES, in the Apocrypha; taking care to observe the Chronology regularly, by referring to the Index, which supplies the deficiencies of this history, from *Josephus's Antiquities of the Jews*. The first of Maccabees carries on the story, till within 195 years of our

68 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

Lord's circumcision: The second book is the same narrative, written by a different hand, and does not bring the history so forward as the first; so that, it may be entirely omitted, unless you have the curiosity to read some particulars of the heroic constancy of the Jews, under the tortures inflicted by their heathen conquerors, with a few other things not mentioned in the first book.

You must then connect the history by the help of the Index, which will give you brief heads of the changes that happened in the state of the Jews, from this time, till the birth of the Messiah.

The

The other books of the Apocrypha, though not admitted as of sacred authority, have many things well worth your attention ; particularly the admirable book called ECCLESIASTICUS, and the Book of WISDOM. But, in the course of reading which I advise, these must be omitted till after you have gone through the Gospels and Acts, that you may not lose the historical thread.—I must reserve however what I have to say to you, concerning the New Testament, to another letter.

Adieu, my dear !

L E T T E R III.

MY DEAREST NIECE,

WE come now to that part
of scripture, which is the
most important of all; and which
you must make your constant study,
not only till you are thoroughly ac-
quainted with it, but all your life
long; because, how often soever
repeated, it is impossible to read
the life and death of our blessed
Saviour, without renewing and in-
creasing in our hearts that love,
and reverence, and gratitude to-
wards

wards him, which is so justly due for all he did, and suffered, for us ! Every word that fell from his lips is more precious than all the treasures of the earth ; for his “ are the “ words of eternal life ! ” They must therefore be laid up in your heart, and constantly referred to, on all occasions, as the rule and direction of all your actions ; particularly those very comprehensive moral precepts he has graciously left with us, which can never fail to direct us aright, if fairly and honestly applied : such as “ *whatsoever ye would “ that men should do unto you, even “ so do unto them.* ” — There is no occasion, great or small, on which

72 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

you may not safely apply this rule, for the direction of your conduct: and, whilst your heart honestly adheres to it, you can never be guilty of any sort of injustice or unkindness. The two great commandments, which contain the summary of our duty to God and man, are no less easily retained, and made a standard by which to judge our own hearts. — “*To love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our strength; and our neighbour (or fellow creature) as ourselves.*” “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour,” therefore, if you have true benevolence, you will never do any thing
injurious

injurious to individuals, or to society. Now, all crimes whatever, are (in their remoter consequences, at least, if not immediately, and apparently) injurious to the society in which we live. It is impossible to love God, without desiring to please him, and, as far as we are able, to resemble him; therefore, the love of God must lead to every virtue in the highest degree; and, we may be sure, we do not truly love him, if we content ourselves with avoiding flagrant sins, and do not strive, in good earnest, to reach the greatest degree of perfection we are capable of. Thus do those few words direct us to the highest Christian

74 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

Christian virtue. Indeed, the whole tenor of the gospel is to offer us every help, direction, and motive, that can enable us to attain that degree of perfection, on which depends our eternal good.

What an example is set before us in our blessed Master ! How is his whole life, from earliest youth, dedicated to the pursuit of true wisdom, and to the practice of the most exalted virtue ? When you see him, at *twelve years of age*, in the temple, amongst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, on the subject of religion, and astonishing them all with his understanding

standing and answers—you will say, perhaps,—“ Well might the Son of
“ God, even at those years, be far
“ wiser than the aged; but, can a
“ mortal child emulate such heaven-
“ ly wisdom? Can such a pattern
“ be proposed to *my* imitation?”—
Yes, my dear;—remember that he
has bequeathed to you his heavenly
wisdom, as far as concerns your
own good. He has left you such
declarations of his will, and of the
consequences of your actions, as
you are, even now, fully able to
understand, if you will but attend
to them. If then you will imitate
his zeal for knowledge, if you will
delight in gaining information and
improve-

76 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

improvement; you may even now become "*wise unto salvation.*"—Unmoved by the praise he acquired amongst these learned men, you see him meekly return to the subjection of a child, under those who appeared to be his parents, though he was in reality their Lord: you see him return to live with them, to work for them, and to be the joy and solace of their lives; till the time came, when he was to enter on that scene of public action, for which his heavenly father had sent him from his own right hand to take upon him the form of a poor carpenter's son. What a lesson of humility is this, and of obedience

to parents!—When, having received the glorious testimony from heaven, of his being the beloved Son of the most High, he enters on his public ministry, what an example does he give us, of the most extensive and constant benevolence!—how are all his hours spent in doing good to the souls and bodies of men!—not the meanest sinner is below his notice:—to reclaim and save them, he condescends to converse familiarly with the most corrupt, as well as the most abject. All his miracles are wrought to benefit mankind; not one to punish and afflict them. Instead of using the almighty power, which accom-

78 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

accompanied him, to the purpose of exalting himself and treading down his enemies, he makes no other use of it than to heal and to save.

When you come to read of his sufferings and death, the ignominy and reproach, the sorrow of mind, and torment of body which he submitted to—when you consider, that it was all for our sakes—“that by his stripes
“ we are healed”—and by his death we are raised from destruction to everlasting life—what can I say that can add any thing to the sensations you must then feel?—No power of language can make the scene more touching than it appears
in

in the plain and simple narrations of the evangelists. The heart that is unmoved by it can be scarcely human : — but, my dear, the emotions of tenderness and compunction, which almost every one feels in reading this account, will be of no avail, unless applied to the true end—unless it inspires you with a sincere and warm affection towards your blessed Lord — with a firm resolution to obey his commands ; —to be his faithful disciple—and ever to renounce and abhor those sins, which brought mankind under divine condemnation, and from which we have been redeemed, at so dear a rate. Remember that the
title

title of Christian, or follower of Christ, implies a more than ordinary degree of holiness and goodness. As our motives to virtue are stronger than those which are afforded to the rest of mankind, our guilt will be proportionably greater if we depart from it.

Our Saviour appears to have had three great purposes, in descending from his glory, and dwelling amongst men. The first, to teach them true virtue, both by his example and precepts : The second, to give them the most forcible motives to the practice of it, by “ bringing life and immortality

“ to

“to light:” by shewing them the certainty of a resurrection and judgment, and the absolute necessity of obedience to God’s laws. The third, to sacrifice himself for us, to obtain by his death the remission of our sins upon our repentance and reformation, and the power of bestowing on his sincere followers the inestimable gift of immortal happiness.

What a tremendous scene of the *last day* does the gospel place before our eyes!—of *that day* when you, and every one of us, shall awake from the grave, and behold the Son of God, on his glorious tribunal, attended

82 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

by millions of celestial beings, of whose superior excellence we can now form no adequate idea :—When in presence of all mankind, of those holy angels, and of the great judge himself, you must give an account of your past life, and hear your final doom, from which there can be no appeal, and which must determine your fate, to all eternity. Then think—if for a moment you can bear the thought — what will be the desolation, shame and anguish of those wretched souls, who shall hear these dreadful words ;—
“ *Depart from me, ye cursed, into*
“ *everlasting fire, prepared for the*
“ *devil and his angels.*”—Oh !—my
beloved

beloved child!—I cannot support even the idea of your becoming one of those undone, lost creatures!—I trust in God's mercy, that you will make a better use of that knowledge of his will, which he has vouchsafed you, and of those amiable dispositions he has given you. Let us therefore turn from this horrid, this insupportable view—and rather endeavour to imagine, as far as is possible, what will be the sensations of your soul, if you shall hear our heavenly judge address you in these transporting words—“*Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the founda-*

84 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

“ tion of the world.”—Think, what it must be, to become an object of the esteem and applause—not only of all mankind assembled together—but of all the host of heaven, of our blessed Lord himself—nay—of his and our almighty Father:—to find your frail flesh changed in a moment into a glorious celestial body, endowed with perfect beauty, health, and agility—to find your soul cleansed from all its faults and infirmities; exalted to the purest and noblest affections—overflowing with divine love and rapturous gratitude!—to have your understanding enlightened and refined—your heart enlarged and purified

rified—and every power, and disposition of mind and body, adapted to the highest relish of virtue and happiness!—Thus accomplished, to be admitted into the society of amiable and happy beings, all united in the most perfect peace and friendship, all breathing nothing but love to God, and to each other ;—with them to dwell in scenes more delightful than the richest imagination can paint — free from every pain and care, and from all possibility of change or satiety :—but, above all, to enjoy the more immediate presence of God himself—to be able to comprehend and admire his adorable perfections in a

high degree, though still far short of their infinity — to be conscious of his love and favour, and to rejoice in the light of his countenance!—but here all imagination fails:—We can form no idea of that bliss which may be communicated to us by such a near approach to the source of all beauty and all good:—We must content ourselves with believing that it is what *mortal eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* The crown of all our joys will be to know that we are secure of possessing them *for ever*—What a transporting idea!

My

My dearest child ! can you reflect on all these things, and not feel the most earnest longings after immortality ? — Do not all other views and desires seem mean and trifling, when compared with this ? — And does not your inmost heart resolve that this shall be the chief and constant object of its wishes and pursuit, through the whole course of your life ? — If you are not insensible to that desire of happiness, which seems woven into our nature, you cannot surely be unmoved by the prospect of such a transcendant degree of it ; and that, continued to all eternity — perhaps continually increasing. You can-

88. *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

not but dread the forfeiture of such an inheritance as the most insupportable evil!—Remember then—remember the conditions on which alone it can be obtained. God will not give to vice, to carelessness, or sloth, the prize he has proposed to virtue. You have every help that can animate your endeavours :— You have written laws to direct you—the example of Christ and his disciples to encourage you—the most awakening motives to engage you—and, you have besides, the comfortable promise of constant assistance from the Holy Spirit, if you diligently and sincerely pray for it. O, my dear Child!—let not

all this mercy be lost upon you—
but give your attention to this your
only important concern, and ac-
cept, with profound gratitude, the
inestimable advantages that are thus
affectionately offered you.

Though the four gospels are each
of them a narration of the life, say-
ings, and death of Christ; yet, as
they are not exactly alike, but some
circumstances and sayings, omitted
in one, are recorded in another,
you must make yourself perfectly
mistress of them all.

THE ACTS of the holy apostles,
endowed with the Holy Ghost, and
autho-

90 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

authorized by their divine Master, come next in order to be read.— Nothing can be more interesting and edifying, than the history of their actions—of the piety, zeal, and courage, with which they preached the glad tidings of salvation—and of the various exertions of the wonderful powers conferred on them by the Holy Spirit, for the confirmation of their mission.

The character of St. Paul, and his miraculous conversion, demand your particular attention: most of the apostles were men of low birth and education; but St. Paul was a Roman citizen; that is, he possessed the
privi-

privileges annexed to the freedom of the city of Rome, which was considered as an high distinction in those countries, that had been conquered by the Romans. He was educated amongst the most learned sect of the Jews, and by one of their principal doctors. He was a man of extraordinary eloquence, as appears not only in his writings, but in several speeches in his own defence, pronounced before governors and courts of justice, when he was called to account for the doctrines he taught.—He seems to have been of an uncommonly warm temper, and zealous in whatever religion he professed: this zeal, before

92 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

before his conversion, shewed itself in the most unjustifiable actions, by furiously persecuting the innocent Christians: but, though his actions were bad, we may be sure his intentions were good; otherwise we should not have seen a miracle employed to convince him of his mistake, and to bring him into the right way. This example may assure us of the mercy of God towards mistaken consciences, and ought to inspire us with the most enlarged charity and good-will towards those, whose erroneous principles mislead their conduct: instead of resentment and hatred against their persons, we ought only

ly to feel an active wish of assisting them to find the truth, since we know not whether, if convinced, they might not prove, like St. Paul, chosen vessels to promote the honour of God, and of true religion. It is not my intention now to enter with you into any of the arguments for the truth of Christianity, otherwise it would be impossible wholly to pass over that which arises from this remarkable conversion, and which has been so admirably illustrated by a noble writer*, whose tract on this subject is in every body's hand.

* Lord Lyttelton.

Next

94 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

Next follow the EPISTLES, which make a very important part of the New Testament ; and you cannot be too much employed in reading them. They contain the most excellent precepts and admonitions, and are of particular use in explaining more at large several doctrines of Christianity, which we could not so fully comprehend without them. There are indeed in the Epistles of St. Paul many passages hard to be understood: Such, in particular, are the first eleven chapters to the Romans: the greater part of his Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians: and several chapters of that to the Hebrews. Instead of
per-

perplexing yourself with these more obscure passages of scripture, I would wish you to employ your attention chiefly on those that are plain; and to judge of the doctrines taught in the other parts, by comparing them with what you find in these. It is through the neglect of this rule, that many have been led to draw the most absurd doctrines from the holy scriptures.—Let me particularly recommend to your careful perusal the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. In the 14th chapter, St. Paul has in view the difference between the Jewish and Gentile (or Heathen) converts at that time ;

time ; the former were disposed to look with horror on the latter, for their impiety in not paying the same regard to the distinctions of days and meats, that they did ; and the latter, on the contrary, were inclined to look with contempt on the former, for their weakness and superstition. Excellent is the advice which the Apostle gives to both parties : he exhorts the Jewish converts not to judge, and the Gentiles not to despise ; remembering that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost :—Endeavour to conform yourself to this advice ; to acquire a temper of
universal

universal candour and benevolence : and learn neither to despise nor condemn any persons on account of their particular modes of faith and worship : remembering always, that goodness is confined to no party—that there are wise and worthy men among all the sects of Christians—and that, to his own master, every one must stand or fall.

I will enter no farther into the several points discussed by St. Paul in his various epistles — most of them too intricate for your understanding at present, and many of them beyond my abilities to state clearly. I will only again recom-

VOL. I.

H

mend

98 *On the Study of the holy Scriptures.*

commend to you, to read those passages frequently, which, with so much fervour and energy, excite you to the practice of the most exalted piety and benevolence. If the effusions of a heart, warm'd with the tenderest affection for the whole human race—if precept, warning, encouragement, example, urged by an eloquence, which such affection only could inspire, are capable of influencing your mind—you cannot fail to find, in such parts of his epistles as are adapted to your understanding, the strongest persuasives to every virtue that can adorn and improve your nature.

The

The Epistle of St. James is entirely practical, and exceedingly fine; you cannot study it too much. It seems particularly designed to guard Christians against misunderstanding some things in St. Paul's writings, which have been fatally perverted to the encouragement of a dependance on faith alone, without good works. But, the more rational commentators will tell you, that by the works of the law, which the apostle asserts to be incapable of justifying us, he means, not the works of moral righteousness, but the ceremonial works of the Mosaic law; on which the Jews laid the greatest stress, as necessary to salva-

tion. But, St. James tells us, that
 “ if any man among us seem to be
 “ religious, and bridleth not his
 “ tongue, but deceiveth his own
 “ heart, that man’s religion is vain.”
 —And that, “ pure religion, and
 “ undefiled before God and the Fa-
 “ ther, is this, to visit the father-
 “ less and widow in their affliction,
 “ and to keep himself unspotted
 “ from the world.” Faith in Christ,
 if it produce not these effects, he
 declares is dead, or of no power.

The Epistles of St. Peter are al-
 so full of the best instructions and
 admonitions, concerning the rela-
 tive duties of life; amongst which

On the Study of the holy Scriptures. 101
are set forth the duties of women
in general, and of wives in parti-
cular. Some part of his second
Epistle is prophetical; warning the
church of false teachers, and false
doctrines, which should undermine
morality, and disgrace the cause of
Christianity.

The first of St. John is written
in a highly figurative stile, which
makes it in some parts hard to be
understood: but the spirit of divine
love, which it so fervently expresses,
renders it highly edifying and de-
lightful.—That love of God and of
man; which this beloved apostle so
pathetically recommends, is in truth

the essence of religion, as our Saviour himself informs us.

The book of REVELATIONS contains a prophetical account of most of the great events relating to the Christian church, which were to happen from the time of the writer, St. John, to the end of the world. Many learned men have taken a great deal of pains to explain it; and they have done this in many instances very successfully: but, I think, it is yet too soon for you to study this part of scripture: some years hence perhaps there may be no objection to your attempting it, and taking into your hands
the

the best expositions to assist you in reading such of the most difficult parts of the New Testament as you cannot now be supposed to understand.—May heaven direct you in studying this sacred volume, and render it the means of making you wise unto salvation!—May you love and reverence, as it deserves, this blessed and invaluable book, which contains the best rule of life, the clearest declaration of the will and laws of the deity, the reviving assurance of favour to true penitents, and the unspeakably joyful tidings of eternal life and happiness to all the truly virtuous, through Jesus

104 *On the Regulation of the*
Christ, the Saviour and Deliverer
of the world.

Adieu.

L E T T E R I V .

YOU will have read the New Testament to very little purpose, my dearest Niece, if you do not perceive the great end and intention of all its precepts to be the improvement and regulation of the heart: not the outward actions alone, but the inward affections, which give birth to them, are the subjects of those precepts; as appears

appears in our Saviour's explanation * of the commandments delivered to Moses; and in a thousand other passages of the gospels, which it is needless to recite. There are no virtues more insisted on, as necessary to our future happiness, than humility, and sincerity, or uprightness of heart; yet, none more difficult and rare. Pride and vanity, the vices opposite to humility, are the sources of almost all the worst faults, both of men and women. The latter are particularly accused—and not without reason—of *vanity*, the vice of *little* minds, chiefly conversant with trifling subjects.

* Matth. v.

Pride and vanity have been supposed to differ so essentially, as hardly ever to be found in the same person. "Too proud to be vain," is no uncommon expression, by which, I suppose, is meant, too proud to be over anxious for the admiration of others: but this seems to be founded on mistake, Pride is, I think, an high opinion of one's self, and an affected contempt of others: I say *affected*, for that it is not a *real* contempt is evident from this, that the lowest object of it is important enough to torture the proud man's heart, only by refusing him the homage and admiration he requires. Thus Ha-

man

man could relish none of the advantages on which he valued himself, whilst that Mordecai, whom he pretended to despise, sat still in the king's gate, and would not bow to him as he passed. But, as the proud man's contempt of others is only assumed with a view to awe them into reverence by his pretended superiority, so it does not preclude an extreme inward anxiety about their opinions, and a slavish dependance on them for all his gratifications: Pride, though a distinct passion, is seldom unaccompanied by vanity, which is an extravagant desire of admiration. Indeed, I never saw an insolent person, in whom
a dis-

a discerning eye might not discover a very large share of vanity, and of envy, its usual companion. One may nevertheless see many *vain* persons who are not *proud*: though they desire to be admired, they do not always admire themselves; but as timid minds are apt to despair of those things they earnestly wish for, so you will often see the woman who is most anxious to be thought handsome, most inclined to be dissatisfied with her looks, and to think all the assistance of art too little to attain the end desired. To this cause, I believe, we may generally attribute affectation; which seems to imply a mean opinion of one's

one's own real form, or character, while we strive against nature to alter ourselves by ridiculous contortions of body, or by feigned sentiments and unnatural manners. There is no art so mean, which this mean passion will not descend to for its gratification — no creature so insignificant, whose incense it will not gladly receive. Far from despising others, the vain man will court them with the most assiduous adulation; in hopes, by feeding their vanity, to induce them to supply the craving wants of his own. He will put on the guise of benevolence, tenderness, and friendship, where he feels not the least degree of kindness,

ness, in order to prevail on good-nature and gratitude, to like and to commend him: but if, in any particular case, he fancies, that airs of insolence and contempt may succeed better, he makes no scruple to assume them; though so awkwardly, that he still appears to depend on the breath of the person, he would be thought to despise. Weak and timid natures seldom venture to try this last method; and, when they do, it is without the assurance necessary to carry it on with success: but, a bold and confident mind will oftener endeavour to command and extort admiration than to court it. As women are

more fearful than men, perhaps this may be one reason why they are more vain than proud; whilst the other sex are oftener proud than vain. It is, I suppose, from some opinion of a certain greatness of mind accompanying the one vice rather than the other, that many will readily confess their pride, nay and even be proud of their pride, whilst every creature is ashamed of being convicted of vanity. You see, however, that the end of both is the same, though pursued by different means; or, if it differs, it is in the importance of the subject.—Whilst men are proud of power, of wealth, dignity, learning, or abilities,

lities, young women are usually ambitious of nothing more than to be admired for their persons, their dress, or their most trivial accomplishments. The homage of men is their grand object; but, they only desire them to be in love with their persons, careless how despicable their minds appear, even to these their pretended adorers. I have known a woman so vain as to boast of the most disgraceful addresses; being contented to be thought meanly of, in points the most interesting to her honour, for the sake of having it known, that her person was attractive enough to make a man transgress the bounds of respect

spect due to her character, which was not a vicious one, if you except this intemperate vanity. But, this passion too often leads to the most ruinous actions, always corrupts the heart, and, when indulged, renders it, perhaps, as displeasing in the sight of the Almighty, as those faults which find least mercy from the world; yet alas! it is a passion so prevailing, I had almost said universal, in our sex, that it requires all the efforts of reason, and all the assistance of grace, totally to subdue it. Religion is indeed the only effectual remedy for this evil. If our hearts are not dedicated to God, they will in some

way or other be dedicated to the world, both in youth and age. If our actions are not constantly referred to him, if his approbation and favour is not our principal object, we shall certainly take up with the applause of men, and make that the ruling motive of our conduct. How melancholy is it to see this phantom so eagerly followed through life!—whilst all that is truly valuable to us is looked upon with indifference; or, at best, made subordinate to this darling pursuit!

Equally vain and absurd is every scheme of life that is not sub-
servient

vient to, and does not terminate in that great end of our being—the attainment of real excellence, and of the favour of God. Whenever this becomes sincerely our object, then will pride and vanity, envy, ambition, covetousness, and every evil passion, lose their power over us; and we shall, in the language of scripture, “Walk humbly with our God.” We shall then cease to repine under our natural or accidental disadvantages, and feel dissatisfied only with our moral defects;—we shall love and respect all our fellow creatures, as the children of the same dear parent, and particularly those, who seek to do

his will: All our delight will be
“ in the saints that are in the earth,
“ and in such as excel in virtue.”

We shall wish to cultivate goodwill, and to promote innocent enjoyment wherever we are;—we shall strive to please, not from vanity, but from benevolence. Instead of contemplating our own fancied perfections, or even real superiority with self-complacence, religion will teach us to “ look into ourselves,
“ and fear:”—the best of us, God knows, have enough to fear, if we honestly search into all the dark recesses of the heart, and bring out every thought and intention fairly to the light, to be tried by the precepts

cepts of our pure and holy religion.

It is with the rules of the gospel we must compare ourselves, and not with the world around us; for we know that “the many are wicked;” and that we must not be “conformed to the world.”

How necessary it is, frequently thus to enter into ourselves, and search out our spirit, will appear, if we consider, how much the human heart is prone to insincerity, and how often, from being first led by vanity into attempts to impose up-

on others, we come at last to impose on ourselves.

There is nothing more common than to see people fall into the most ridiculous mistakes, with regard to their own characters; but I can by no means allow such mistakes to be unavoidable, and therefore innocent: They arose from voluntary insincerity, and are continued for want of that strict honesty towards ourselves and others, which the scripture calls "*singleness of heart*;" and which in modern language is termed *simplicity*—the most enchanting of all qualities, esteemed and beloved

beloved in proportion to its rareness.

He, who “requires truth in the “inward parts,” will not excuse our self-deception; for he has commanded us to examine ourselves diligently, and has given us such rules as can never mislead us, if we desire the truth, and are willing to see our faults, in order to correct them. But this is the point in which we are defective; we are desirous to gain our own approbation, as well as that of others, at a cheaper rate than that of being really what we ought to be; and we take pains to persuade ourselves

that we are that which we indolently admire and approve.

There is nothing in which this self-deception is more notorious than in what regards sentiment and feeling. Let a vain young woman be told that tenderness and softness is the peculiar charm of the sex—that even their weakness is lovely, and their fears becoming—and you will presently observe her grow so tender as to be ready to weep for a fly; so fearful, that she starts at a feather; and, so weak hearted, that the smallest accident quite overpowers her. Her fondness and affection becomes fulsome and ridiculous;
her

her compassion grows contemptible weakness; and her apprehensiveness the most abject cowardice: for, when once she quits the direction of nature, she knows not where to stop, and continually exposes herself by the most absurd extremes.

Nothing so effectually defeats its own ends as this kind of affectation: for though warm affections and tender feelings are beyond measure amiable and charming, when perfectly natural, and kept under the due controul of reason and principle, yet nothing is so truly disgusting as the affectation of them,

them, or even the unbridled indulgence of such as are real.

Remember, my dear, that our feelings were not given us for our ornament, but to spur us on to right actions.—Compassion, for instance, was not impressed upon the human heart, only to adorn the fair face with tears, and to give an agreeable languor to the eyes; it was designed to excite our utmost endeavours to relieve the sufferer. Yet, how often have I heard that selfish weakness, which flies from the sight of distress, dignified with the name of tenderness! — “My
“ friend is, I hear, in the deepest
“ affliction

“ affliction and misery ; — I have
“ not seen her—for indeed I cannot
“ bear such scenes—they affect me
“ too much!—those who have less
“ sensibility are fitter for this
“ world ; — but, for my part, I
“ own, I am not able to support
“ such things.—I shall not attempt
“ to visit her, till I hear she has
“ recovered her spirits.” — This
have I heard said, with an air of
complacency ; and the poor self-
ish creature has persuaded herself
that she had finer feelings than
those generous friends, who were
sitting patiently in the house of
mourning — watching, in silence,
the proper moment to pour in the
balm

balm of comfort;—who suppressed their own sensations, and only attended to those of the afflicted person—and, whose tears flowed in secret, whilst their eyes and voice were taught to enliven the sinking heart with the appearance of cheerfulness.

That sort of tenderness which makes us useless, may indeed be pitied and excused, if owing to natural imbecillity; but, if it pretends to loveliness and excellence, it becomes truly contemptible.

The same degree of active courage is not to be expected in woman

man as in man; and, not belonging to her nature, it is not agreeable in her: But, passive courage — patience, and fortitude under sufferings—presence of mind, and calm resignation in danger — are surely desirable in every rational creature; especially in one professing to believe in an over-ruling providence, in which we may at all times quietly confide, and which we may safely trust with every event that does not depend upon our own will. Whenever you find yourself deficient in these virtues, let it be a subject of shame, and humiliation — not of vanity and self-complacence: do not fancy yourself the more amiable
for

for that which really makes you despicable — but, content yourself with the faults and weakneſſes that belong to you, without putting on more by way of ornament. With regard to tenderness, remember that compassion is best shewn by an ardour to relieve — and affection by assiduity to promote the good and happiness of the persons you love: that tears are unamiable, instead of being ornamental, when voluntarily indulged; and can never be attractive but when they flow irresistibly, and avoid observation as much as possible: The same may be said of every other mark of passion. It attracts our sympathy,

sympathy, if involuntary and not designed for our notice—It offends, if we see that it is purposely indulged and obtruded on our observation.

Another point, on which the heart is apt to deceive itself, is generosity: we cannot bear to suspect ourselves of base and ungenerous feelings, therefore we let them work without attending to them, or we endeavour to find out some better motive for those actions, which really flow from envy and malignity. Before you flatter yourself that you are a generous benevolent person, take care to examine, whether

ther you are really glad of every advantage and excellence, which your friends and companions possess, though they are such as you are yourself deficient in. If your sister or friend makes a greater proficiency than yourself in any accomplishment, which you are in pursuit of, Do you never wish to stop her progress, instead of trying to hasten your own?

The boundaries between virtuous emulation and vicious envy are very nice, and may be easily mistaken. The first will awaken your attention to your own defects and excite your endeavours to improve;
the

the last will make you repine at the improvements of others, and wish to rob them of the praise they have deserved. Do you sincerely rejoice when your sister is enjoying pleasure or commendation, though you are at the same time in disagreeable or mortifying circumstances?—Do you delight to see her approved and beloved, even by those who do not pay you equal attention?—Are you afflicted and humbled, when she is found to be in fault, though you yourself are remarkably clear from the same offence?—If your heart assures you of the affirmative to these questions, then may you think

Vol. I.

K

your-

yourself a kind sister, and a generous friend: for, you must observe, my dear, that scarcely any creature is so depraved as not to be capable of kind affections in some circumstances. We are all naturally benevolent, when no selfish interest interferes, and where no advantage is to be given up: we can all pity distress, when it lies complaining at our feet, and confesses our superiority and happier situation; but I have seen the sufferer himself become the object of envy and ill-will, as soon as his fortitude and greatness of mind have begun to attract admiration, and to make the
envious

envious person feel the superiority of virtue above good fortune.

To take sincere pleasure in the blessings and excellencies of others is a much surer mark of benevolence than to pity their calamities: and, you must always acknowledge yourself ungenerous and selfish, whenever you are less ready to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," than to "weep with them that weep." If ever your commendations of others are forced from you, by the fear of betraying your envy—or if ever you feel a secret desire to mention something

that may abate the admiration given them, do not try to conceal the base disposition from yourself, since that is not the way to cure it.

Human nature is ever liable to corruption, and has in it the seeds of every vice, as well as of every virtue; and, the first will be continually shooting forth and growing up, if not carefully watched and rooted out as fast as they appear. It is the business of religion to purify and exalt us, from a state of imperfection and infirmity, to that which is necessary and essential to happiness. Envy would make us miserable

ferable in heaven itself, could it be admitted there; for we must there see beings far more excellent, and consequently more happy than ourselves; and, till we can rejoice in seeing virtue rewarded in proportion to its degree, we can never hope to be among the number of the blessed.

Watch then, my dear child, and observe every evil propensity of your heart, that you may in time correct it, with the assistance of that grace, which alone can conquer the evils of our nature, and which you must constantly and earnestly implore.

K 3

I must

I must add, that even those vices which you would most blush to own, and which most effectually defile and vilify the female heart, may by degrees be introduced into yours—to the ruin of that virtue, without which, misery and shame must be your portion — unless the avenues of the heart are guarded by a sincere abhorrence of every thing that approaches towards evil. Would you be of the number of those blessed, “ who are pure in heart,”—you must hate and avoid every thing, both in books and in conversation, that conveys impure ideas, however neatly cloathed in decent language, or recommended

to your taste by pretended refinements, and tender sentiments — by elegance of stile, or force of wit and genius.

I must not now begin to give you my thoughts on the regulation of the affections, as that is a subject of too much consequence to be soon dismissed — I shall dedicate to it my next letter: in the mean time, believe me,

Your ever affectionate.

LETTER V.

THE attachments of the heart, on which almost all the happiness or misery of life depends, are most interesting objects of our consideration. I shall give my dear niece the observations which experience has enabled me to draw from real life, and not from what others have said or written, however great their authority.

The first attachment of young hearts is *friendship* — the noblest
and

and happiest of affections, when real and built on a solid foundation; but, oftener pernicious than useful to very young people, because the connection itself is ill understood, and the subjects of it frequently ill chosen. Their first error is that of supposing equality of age, and exact similitude of disposition indispensably requisite in friends; whereas, these are circumstances which in great measure disqualify them for assisting each other in moral improvements, or supplying each other's defects; they expose them to the same dangers, and incline them to encourage rather than correct each other's failings.

The

The grand cement of this kind of friendship is telling secrets, which they call confidence; and, I verily believe that the desire of having secrets to tell, has often helped to draw silly girls into very unhappy adventures. If they have no lover or amour to talk of, the too frequent subject of their confidence is betraying the secrets of their families; or conjuring up fancied hardships to complain of against their parents or relations: this odious cabal, they call friendship; and fancy themselves dignified by the profession; but nothing is more different from the reality, as is seen by observing how generally those
early

early friendships drop off, as the parties advance in years and understanding.

Do not you, my dear, be too ready to profess a friendship with any of your young companions. Love them, and be always ready to serve and oblige them, and to promote all their innocent gratifications: but, be very careful how you enter into confidences with girls of your own age. Rather choose some person of riper years and judgment, whose good-nature and worthy principles may assure you of her readiness to do you service, and

140 *On the Regulation of the*
and of her candour and condescen-
sion towards you.

I do not expect that youth should delight to associate with age, or should lay open its feelings and inclinations to such as have almost forgot what they were, or how to make proper allowance for them; but if you are fortunate enough to meet with a young woman eight or ten years older than yourself, of good sense and good principles, to whom you can make yourself agreeable, it may be one of the happiest circumstances of your life. She will be able to advise and to improve

prove you—and, your desire of this assistance will recommend you to her taste, as much as her superior abilities will recommend her to you. Such a connection will afford you more pleasure, as well as more profit, than you can expect from a girl like yourself, equally unprovided with knowledge, prudence, or any of those qualifications, which are necessary to make society delightful.

With a friend, such as I have described, of twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, you can hardly pass an hour without finding yourself brought forwarder in some use-

ful knowledge ; without learning something of the world, or of your own nature, some rule of behaviour, or some necessary caution in the conduct of life : for, even in the gayest conversations, such useful hints may often be gathered from those, whose knowledge and experience are much beyond our own. Whenever you find yourself in real want of advice, or seek the relief of unburdening your heart, such a friend will be able to judge of the feelings you describe, or of the circumstances you are in—perhaps from her own experience—or at least, from the knowledge she will have gained of human nature ; she
will

will be able to point out your dangers, and to guide you into the right path—or, if she finds herself incapable, she will have the prudence to direct you to some abler adviser. The age I have mentioned will not prevent her joining in your pleasures, nor will it make her a dull or grave companion; on the contrary, she will have more materials for entertaining conversation, and her liveliness will shew itself more agreeably than in one of your own age. Yours therefore will be the advantage in such a connection; yet, do not despair of being admitted into it, if you have an amiable and docile disposition. Ingenuous youth

youth has many charms for a benevolent mind; and, as nothing is more endearing than the exercise of benevolence, the hope of being useful and beneficial to you will make her fond of your company.

I have known some of the sweetest and most delightful connections between persons of different ages, in which the elder has received the highest gratification from the affection and docility of the younger; whilst the latter has gained the noblest advantages from the conversation and counsels of her wiser friend. Nor has the attachment been without use as well as pleasure,

pleasure to the elder party. She has found that there is no better way of improving one's own attainments than by imparting them to another; and the desire of doing this in the most acceptable way has added a sweetness and gentleness to her manner, and taught her the arts of insinuating instruction, and of winning the heart, whilst she convinces the understanding.

I hope, my dear, you in your turn will be this useful and engaging friend to your younger companions, particularly to your sister and brothers, who ought ever—unless they should prove unworthy—

to be your nearest and dearest friends, whose interest and welfare you are bound to desire as much as your own. If you are wanting here, do not fancy yourself qualified for friendship with others, but be assured, your heart is too narrow and selfish for so generous an affection.

Remember that the end of true friendship is the good of its object, and the cultivation of virtue, in two hearts emulous of each other, and desirous to perpetuate their society beyond the grave. Nothing can be more contrary to this end than that mutual intercourse
of

of flattery, which some call friendship. A real friend will venture to displease me, rather than indulge my faulty inclinations, or increase my natural frailties; she will endeavour to make me acquainted with myself, and will put me upon guarding the weak parts of my character.

Friendship, in the highest sense of the word, can only subsist between persons of strict integrity, and true generosity. Before you fancy yourself possessed of such a treasure, you should examine the value of your own heart, and see how well it is qualified for so sacred a connec-

tion: and then, a harder task remains—to find out whether the object of your affection is also endued with the same virtuous disposition. Youth and inexperience are ill able to penetrate into characters: the least appearance of good attracts their admiration, and they immediately suppose they have found the object they pursued.

It is a melancholy consideration that the judgment can only be formed by experience, which generally comes too late for our own use, and is seldom accepted for that of others. I fear it is in vain for me to tell you what dangerous mistakes I
made

made in the early choice of friends — how incapable I then was of finding out such as were fit for me, and how little I was acquainted with the true nature of friendship, when I thought myself most fervently engaged in it! — I am sensible all this will hardly persuade you to choose by the eyes of others, or even to suspect that your own may be deceived. Yet, if you should give any weight to my observations, it may not be quite useless to mention to you some of the essential requisites in a friend; and to exhort you never to choose one in whom they are wanting.

The first of these is a deep and sincere regard for religion. If your friend draws her principles from the same source with yourself, if the gospel precepts are the rule of her life, as well as of yours, you will always know what to expect from her, and have one common standard of right and wrong to refer to, by which to regulate all material points of conduct. The woman who thinks lightly of sacred things, or who is ever heard to speak of them with levity or indifference, cannot reasonably be expected to pay a more serious regard to the laws of friendship, or to be uniformly punctual in the performance of any
of

of the duties of society: take no such person to your bosom, however recommended by good humour, wit, or any other qualification; nor let gaiety or thoughtlessness be deemed an excuse for offending in this important point: a person, habituated to the love and reverence of religion and virtue, no more wants the guard of serious consideration to restrain her from speaking disrespectfully of them than to prevent her speaking ill of her dearest friend. In the liveliest hour of mirth, the innocent heart can dictate nothing but what is innocent: it will immediately take alarm at the apprehension of doing wrong, and

stop at once in the full career of youthful sprightliness, if reminded of the neglect or transgression of any duty. Watch for these symptoms of innocence and goodness, and admit no one to your entire affection, who would ever persuade you to make light of any sort of offence, or who can treat, with levity or contempt, any person or thing that bears a relation to religion.

A due regard to reputation is the next indispensable qualification.—

“ Have regard to thy name,” saith the wise son of Sirach, “ for that
“ will continue with thee above a
“ thousand great treasures of gold.”

The

The young person who is careless of blame, and indifferent to the esteem of the wise and prudent part of the world, is not only a most dangerous companion, but gives a certain proof of the want of rectitude in her own mind. Discretion is the guardian of all the virtues; and, when she forsakes them, they cannot long resist the attacks of an enemy. There is a profligacy of spirit in defying the rules of decorum, and despising censure, which seldom ends otherwise than in extreme corruption and utter ruin. Modesty and prudence are qualities that early display themselves and are easily discerned: where these do

not appear, you should avoid, not only friendship, but every step towards intimacy, lest your own character should suffer with that of your companion ; but, where they shine forth in any eminent degree, you may safely cultivate an acquaintance, in the reasonable hope of finding the solid fruits of virtue beneath such sweet and promising blossoms: should you be disappointed, you will at least have run no risque in the search after them, and may cherish as a creditable acquaintance the person so adorned, though she may not deserve a place in your inmost heart.

The

The understanding must next be examined : and this is a point, which requires so much understanding to judge of in another, that I must earnestly recommend to you, not to rely entirely on your own, but to take the opinion of your older friends. I do not wish you to seek for bright and uncommon talents, though these are sources of inexhaustible delight and improvement, when found in company with solid judgment and sound principles. Good sense (by which I mean a capacity for reasoning justly and discerning truly) applied to the uses of life, and exercised in distinguishing characters
and

and directing conduct, is alone *necessary* to an intimate connection; but, without this, the best intentions, though certain of reward hereafter, may fail of producing their effects in this life; nor can they singly constitute the character of an useful and valuable friend. On the other hand, the most dazzling genius, or the most engaging wit and humour, can but ill answer the purposes of friendship, without plain common sense and a faculty of just reasoning.

What can one do with those who will not be answered with reason—
and

and who, when you are endeavouring to convince or persuade them by serious argument, will parry the blow with a witty repartee or a stroke of poignant raillery? I know not whether such a reply is less provoking than that of an obstinate fool, who answers your strongest reasons with — “What you say may be very true, but this is my way of thinking.”— A small acquaintance with the world will shew you instances of the most absurd and foolish conduct, in persons of brilliant parts and entertaining faculties. But, how trifling is the talent of diverting an idle hour, compared with true

true wisdom and prudence, which are perpetually wanted to direct us safely and happily through life, and to make us useful and valuable to others !

Fancy, I know, will have her share, in friendship, as well as in love ;—you must please, as well as serve me, before I can love you as the friend of my heart. But the faculties that please for an evening may not please for life. The humourous man soon runs through his stock of odd stories, mimickry, and jest ; and the wit, by constantly repeated flashes, confounds and tires one's intellect, instead of enlivening it with agreeable surprize :
but,

but, good sense can neither tire nor wear out ;—it improves by exercise—and, increases in value, the more it is known: the pleasure it gives in conversation is lasting and satisfactory, because it is accompanied with improvement ; its worth is proportioned to the occasion that calls for it, and rises highest on the most interesting topics ; the heart, as well as the understanding, finds its account in it ; and our noblest interests are promoted by the entertainment we receive from such a companion.

A good temper is the next qualification, the value of which in a friend,

friend, you will want no arguments to prove, when you are truly convinced of the necessity of it in yourself, which I shall endeavour to shew you in a following letter. But, as this is a quality in which you may be deceived, without a long and intimate acquaintance, you must not be hasty in forming connections, before you have had sufficient opportunity for making observations on this head. A young person, when pleased and enlivened by the presence of her youthful companions, seldom shews ill temper; which must be extreme indeed, if it is not at least controllable in such situations. But, you must watch her

her behaviour to her own family, and the degree of estimation she stands in with them. Observe her manner to servants and inferiors—to children—and even to animals. See in what manner she bears disappointments, contradiction, and restraint; and what degree of vexation she expresses on any accident of loss or trouble. If in such little trials she shews a meek, resigned, and chearful temper, she will probably preserve it on greater occasions; but if she is impatient and discontented under these, how will she support the far greater evils which may await her in her progress through life?—If you should

have an opportunity of seeing her in sickness, observe whether her complaints are of a mild and gentle kind—forced from her by pain, and restrained as much as possible—or whether they are expressions of a turbulent, rebellious mind, that hardly submits to the divine hand. See whether she is tractable, considerate, kind, and grateful to those about her; or whether she takes the opportunity, which their compassion gives her, to tyrannize over, and torment them. Women are in general very liable to ill health, which must necessarily make them in some measure troublesome and disagreeable to those they live with. They should

should therefore take the more pains to lighten the burden as much as possible, by patience and good-humour; and be careful not to let their infirmities break in, on the health, freedom, or enjoyments of others, more than is needful and just. Some ladies seem to think it very improper for any person within their reach, to enjoy a moment's comfort while they are in pain; and make no scruple of sacrificing to their own least convenience, whenever they are indisposed, the proper rest, meals, or refreshments of their servants, and even sometimes of their husbands and children. But, their selfishness defeats its own

purpose, as it weakens that affection and tender pity which excites the most assiduous services, and affords the most healing balm to the heart of the sufferer.

I have already expressed my wishes that your chosen friend may be some years older than yourself; but this is an advantage not always to be obtained. Whatever be her age—*religion, discretion, good sense, and good temper*, must on no account be dispensed with; and, till you can find one so qualified, you had better make no closer connection than that of a mutual intercourse of civilities and good offices.

But,

But, if it is always your aim to mix with the best company, and to be worthy of such society, you will probably meet with some one among them deserving your affection, to whom you may be equally agreeable.

When I speak of the best company, I do not mean in the common acceptation of the word—persons of high rank and fortune—but rather the most worthy and sensible. It is however very important to a young woman to be introduced into life, on a respectable footing, and to converse with those, whose manners and stile of life may

polish her behaviour, refine her sentiments, and give her consequence in the eye of the world. Your equals in rank are most proper for intimacy, but, to be sometimes amongst your superiors is every way desirable and advantageous, unless it should inspire you with pride, or with the foolish desire of emulating their grandeur and expence.

Above all things avoid intimacy with those of low birth and education; nor think it a mark of humility to delight in such society; for it much oftener proceeds from the meanest kind of pride, that of being

ing the head of the company, and seeing your companions subservient to you. The servile flattery and submission, which usually recommend such people, and make amends for their ignorance and want of conversation, will infallibly corrupt your heart, and make all company insipid from whom you cannot expect the same homage. Your manners and faculties, instead of improving, must be continually lowered to suit you to your companions; and, believe me, you will find it no easy matter to raise them again to a level with those of polite and well informed people.

The greatest kindness and civility to inferiors is perfectly consistent with proper caution on this head. Treat them always with affability, and talk to them of their own affairs, with an affectionate interest; but never make them familiar, nor admit them as associates in your diversions: but, above all, never trust them with your secrets, which is putting yourself entirely in their power, and subjecting yourself to the most shameful slavery. The only reason for making choice of such confidants must be the certainty that they will not venture to blame or contradict inclinations, which you are conscious

no true friend would encourage. But this is a meanness into which I trust you are in no danger of falling. I rather hope you will have the laudable ambition of spending your time chiefly with those whose superior talents, education, and politeness, may continually improve you, and whose society will do you honour. However let no advantage of this kind weigh against the want of principle. I have long ago resolved with David, that, as far as lies in my power, "I will not know a wicked person." Nothing can compensate for the contagion of bad example, and for the danger of wearing off by use
that

that abhorrence of evil actions and sentiments, which every innocent mind sets out with, but which an indiscriminate acquaintance in the world soon abates, and at length destroys.

If you are good, and seek friendship only amongst the good, I trust, you will be happy enough to find it. The wise son of Sirach pronounces that you will! — * “ A
“ faithful friend,” saith he, “ is the
“ medicine of life ; and he that
“ feareth the Lord shall find him.”
“ Whoso feareth the Lord shall
“ direct his friendship aright ; for

* Eccclus. v.

“ as.

“ as he is, so shall his neighbour
“ be also.”—In the same admirable
book, you will find directions how
to choose and to preserve a friend.
Indeed there is hardly a circum-
stance in life, concerning which,
you may not there meet with the
best advice imaginable. Caution
in making friendships is particular-
ly recommended.—* “ Be in peace
“ with many, nevertheless have
“ but one counsellor of a thousand.
“ — If thou wouldst get a friend,
“ prove him first, and be not hasty
“ to credit him; for some man is
“ a friend for his own occasion;
“ and will not abide in the day of

* Ecclus. vi.

“ trouble.

“trouble. And there is a friend,
“who, being turned to enmity and
“strife, will discover thy reproach.”
Again—“Some friend is a compa-
“nion at the table, and will not
“continue in the day of thy afflic-
“tion; but in thy prosperity he
“will be as thyself, and will be
“bold over thy servants: if thou
“be brought low, he will be
“against thee, and will hide him-
“self from thy face.”—Chap. ix.
10 — “Forsake not an old friend;
“for the new is not comparable to
“him—A new friend is as new
“wine; when it is old, thou shalt
“drink it with pleasure.”

When

When you have discreetly chosen, the next point is how to preserve your friend. Numbers complain of the fickleness and ingratitude of those on whom they bestowed their affection; but few examine, whether what they complain of is not owing to themselves. Affection is not like a portion of freehold land, which when once settled upon you is a possession for ever, without further trouble on your part. If you grow less deserving, or less attentive to please, you must expect to see the effects of your remissness, in the gradual decline of your friend's esteem and attachment. Resentment and reproaches will

will not recall what you have lost: but, on the contrary, will hasten the dissolution of every remaining tie. The best remedy is, to renew your care and assiduity to deserve and cultivate affection, without seeming to have perceived its abatement. Jealousy and distrust are the bane of friendship, whose essence is esteem and affiance. But if jealousy is expressed by unkind upbraidings, or, what is worse, by cold haughty looks and insolent contempt, it can hardly fail, if often repeated, to realize the misfortune, which at first perhaps was imaginary. Nothing can be more an antidote to affection than such

2

beh-

behaviour, or than the cause of it, which, in reality, is nothing but pride; though the jealous person would fain attribute it to uncommon tenderness and delicacy: But tenderness is never so express;—it is indeed deeply sensible of unkindness, but it cannot be unkind;—it may subsist with anger, but not with contempt;—it may be weakened, or even killed, by ingratitude; but it cannot be changed into hatred. Remember always, that if you would be *loved*, you must be *amiable*. Habit may indeed, for a time, supply the deficiency of merit: what we have long loved, we do not easily cease to love;

love; but habit will at length be conquered by frequent disgusts.—

“ * Whoso casteth a stone at the
“ birds, frayeth them away; and
“ he that upbraideth his friend,
“ breaketh friendship. Though
“ thou drewest a sword at thy
“ friend, yet despair not, for there
“ may be a returning to favour.—
“ If thou hast opened thy mouth
“ against thy friend, fear not, for
“ there may be a reconciliation;
“ except for *upbraiding*, or *pride*,
“ or *disclosing of secrets*, or a *treacherous wound*,—for, for these
“ things every friend will de-
“ part.”

* Eccclus. xxii. 20.

I have

I have hitherto spoken of a friend in the singular number, rather in compliance with the notions of most writers, who have treated of friendship, and who generally suppose it can have but one object, than from my own ideas. The highest kind of friendship is indeed confined to one ;—I mean the conjugal — which, in its perfection, is so entire and absolute an union, of interest, will, and affection, as no other connection can stand in competition with. But there are various degrees of friendship, which can admit of several objects, esteemed, and delighted in, for different qualities—and whose

separate rights are perfectly compatible. Perhaps it is not possible to love two persons exactly in the same degree ; yet, the difference may be so small, that none of the parties can be certain on which side the scale preponderates.

It is a narrowness of mind to wish to confine your friend's affection solely to yourself ; since you are conscious that, however perfect your attachment may be, you cannot possibly supply to her all the blessings she may derive from several friends, who may each love her as well as you do, and may each contribute largely to her happiness.

If she depends on you alone for all the comforts and advantages of friendship, your absence or death may leave her desolate and forlorn. If therefore you prefer her good to your own selfish gratification, you should rather strive to multiply her friends, and be ready to embrace in your affections all who love her, and deserve her love: this generosity will bring its own reward, by multiplying the sources of your pleasures and supports; and your first friend will love you the more for such an endearing proof of the extent of your affection, which can stretch to receive all who are dear to her. But if, on the contrary,

every mark of esteem shewn to another excites uneasiness or resentment in you, the person you love must soon feel her connection with you a burden and restraint. She can own no obligation to so selfish an attachment; nor can her tenderness be increased by that which lessens her esteem. If she is really fickle and ungrateful, she is not worth your reproaches: if not, she must be reasonably offended by such injurious imputations.

You do not want to be told, that the strictest fidelity is required in friendship: and though possibly instances might be brought, in which
even

even the secret of a friend must be sacrificed to the calls of justice and duty, yet these are rare and doubtful cases, and we may venture to pronounce that “ * Whoso discovereth secrets, loseth his credit, and shall never find a friend to his mind.” — “ Love thy friend, and be faithful unto him : but if thou bewrayest his secrets, follow no more after him. — For as a man that hath destroyed his enemy, so hast thou destroyed the love of thy friend. As one that letteth a bird go out of his hand, so hast thou let thy neighbour go. — Follow no more after him, for he is too far

* Eccclus. xxvii. 16.

“ off; he is as a roe escaped out of
“ the snare.—As for a wound it
“ may be bound up; and after re-
“ vilings there may be reconcile-
“ ment; but he that bewrayeth se-
“ crets, is without hope.

But, in order to reconcile this in-
violable fidelity with the duty you
owe to yourself or others, you must
carefully guard against being made
the repository of such secrets as are
not fit to be kept. If your friend
should engage in any unlawful pur-
suit—if, for instance, she should in-
tend to carry on an affair of love,
unknown to her parents—you must
first use your utmost endeavours
to

to dissuade her from it ; and, if she persists, positively and solemnly declare against being a confidant in such a case. Suffer her not to speak to you on the subject, and warn her to forbear acquainting you with any step she may propose to take towards a marriage un sanctified by parental approbation. Tell her, you would think it your duty to apprize her parents of the danger into which she was throwing herself. However unkindly she may take this at the time, she will certainly esteem and love you the more for it, whenever she recovers a sense of her duty, or experiences the sad effects of swerving from it.

There is another case, which I should not choose to suppose possible, in addressing myself to so young a person, was it not that too many instances of it have of late been exposed to public animadversion : I mean the case of a married woman, who encourages or tolerates the addresses of a lover. May no such person be ever called a friend of yours ! but if ever one whom, when innocent, you had loved, should fall into so fatal an error, I can only say that, after proper remonstrances, you must immediately withdraw from all intimacy and confidence with her. Nor let the absurd pretence of *inno-*

cent

cent intentions, in such circumstances, prevail with you to lend your countenance, a moment, to disgraceful conduct. There cannot be innocence, in any degree of indulgence to unlawful passion. The sacred obligations of marriage are very ill understood by the wife, who can think herself innocent, while she parlies with a lover, or with love—and who does not shut her heart and ears against the most distant approaches of either. A virtuous wife—though she should be so unhappy as not to be secured by having her strongest affections fixed on her husband—will never admit an idea of any other man, in
the

the light of a lover: but, if such an idea should unawares intrude into her mind, she would instantly stifle it, before it grew strong enough to give her much uneasiness. Not to the most intimate friend—hardly to her own soul—would she venture to confess a weakness, she would so sincerely abhor. Whenever therefore such infidelity of heart is made a subject of confidence, depend upon it the corruption has spread far, and has been faultily indulged. Enter not into her counsels: Shew her the danger she is in, and then, withdraw yourself from it, whilst you are yet un sullied by contagion.

It

It has been supposed a duty of friendship to lay open every thought and every feeling of the heart to our friend. But I have just mentioned a case, in which this is not only unnecessary but wrong. A disgraceful inclination, which we resolve to conquer, should be concealed from every body; and is more easily subdued when denied the indulgence of talking of its object; and, I think, there may be other instances, in which it would be most prudent to keep our thoughts concealed even from our dearest friend. Some things I would communicate to one friend, and not to another, whom perhaps

I loved

I loved better, because I might know that my first friend was not so well qualified as the other to counsel me on that particular subject : a natural bias on her mind, some prevailing opinion, or some connection with persons concerned, might make her an improper confidant with regard to one particular, though qualified to be so, on all other occasions.

The confidence of friendship is indeed one of its sweetest pleasures and greatest advantages. The human heart often stands in need of some kind and faithful partner of its cares, in whom it may repose

all its weaknesses, and with whom it is sure of finding the tenderest sympathy. Far be it from me to shut up the heart with cold distrust, and rigid caution, or to adopt the odious maxim, that “ we should
“ live with a friend, as if he were
“ one day to become an enemy.” But we must not wholly abandon prudence in any sort of connection; since when every guard is laid aside, our unbounded openness may injure others as well as ourselves. Secrets entrusted to us must be sacredly kept even from our nearest friend; for we have no right to dispose of the secrets of others.

IF

If there is danger in making an improper choice of friends, my dear child, how much more fatal would it be to mistake in a stronger kind of attachment—in that which leads to an irrevocable engagement for life! yet so much more is the understanding blinded, when once the fancy is captivated, that it seems a desperate undertaking, to convince a girl in love that she has mistaken the character of the man she prefers.

If the passions would wait for the decision of judgment, and if a young woman could have the same opportunities of examining into the real

real character of her lover, as into that of a female candidate for her friendship, the same rules might direct you in the choice of both; for, marriage being the highest state of friendship, the qualities requisite in a friend are still more important in a husband. But young women know so little of the world, especially of the other sex, and such pains are usually taken to deceive them, that they are every way unqualified to choose for themselves, upon their own judgment. Many a heart-ach shall I feel for you, my sweet girl, if I live a few years longer!—Since, not only all your happiness in this world,

world, but your advancement in religion and virtue, or your apostacy from every good principle you have been taught, will probably depend on the companion you fix to for life. Happy will it be for you if you are wise and modest enough to withdraw from temptation, and preserve your heart free and open to receive the just recommendation of your parents: farther than a recommendation, I dare say they will never go, in an affair, which, though it should be begun by them, ought never to be proceeded in, without your free concurrence.

What-

Whatever romantic notions you may hear, or read of, depend upon it, those matches are the happiest which are made on rational grounds — on suitableness of character, degree, and fortune — on mutual esteem, and the prospect of a real and permanent friendship. Far be it from me, to advise you to marry where you do not love;—a mercenary marriage is a detestable prostitution:—But, on the other hand, an union formed upon mere personal liking, without the requisite foundation of esteem, without the sanction of parental approbation, and, consequently, without the blessing of God, can be productive of nothing

but misery and shame. The passion, to which every consideration of duty and prudence is sacrificed, instead of supplying the loss of all other advantages, will soon itself be changed into mutual distrust—repentance—reproaches—and finally perhaps into hatred. The distresses it brings will be void of every consolation: you will have disgusted the friends who should be your support—debased yourself in the eyes of the world—and, what is much worse, in your own eyes; and even in those of your husband: above all, you will have offended that God, who alone can shield you from calamity.

From

From an act like this, I trust, your duty and gratitude to your kind parents—the first of duties next to that we owe to God, and inseparably connected with it—will effectually preserve you. But most young people think they have fulfilled their duty, if they refrain from actually marrying against prohibition. They suffer their affections, and even perhaps their word of honour to be engaged, without consulting their parents: yet satisfy themselves with resolving not to marry without their consent: not considering that, besides the wretched, useless, uncomfortable state they plunge *themselves* into, when they

contract an hopeless engagement, they must likewise involve a *parent* in the miserable dilemma of either giving a forced consent against his judgment, or of seeing his beloved child pine away her prime of life in fruitless anxiety — seeing her accuse him of tyranny, because he restrains her from certain ruin — seeing her affections alienated from her family — and all her thoughts engrossed by one object, to the destruction of her health and spirits and of all her improvements and occupations. What a cruel alternative for parents, whose happiness is bound up with that of their child! — The time to consult them

is

is before you have given a lover the least encouragement; nor ought you to listen a moment to the man, who would wish you to keep his addresses secret; since he thereby shews himself conscious that they are not fit to be encouraged.

But perhaps I have said enough on this subject at present; though, if ever advice on such a topic can be of use, it must be before passion has got possession of the heart and silenced both reason and principle. Fix therefore in your mind, as deeply as possible, those rules of duty and prudence, which now seem reasonable to you, that they may

may be at hand in the hour of trial, and save you from the miseries, in which strong affections, unguided by discretion, involve so many of our sex.

If you love virtue sincerely, you will be incapable of loving an openly vicious character. But, alas! — your innocent heart may be easily ensnared by an artful one — and from this danger nothing can secure you but the experience of those, to whose guidance God has entrusted you: may you be wise enough to make use of it! — So will you have the fairest chance of attaining the best blessings this world can af-

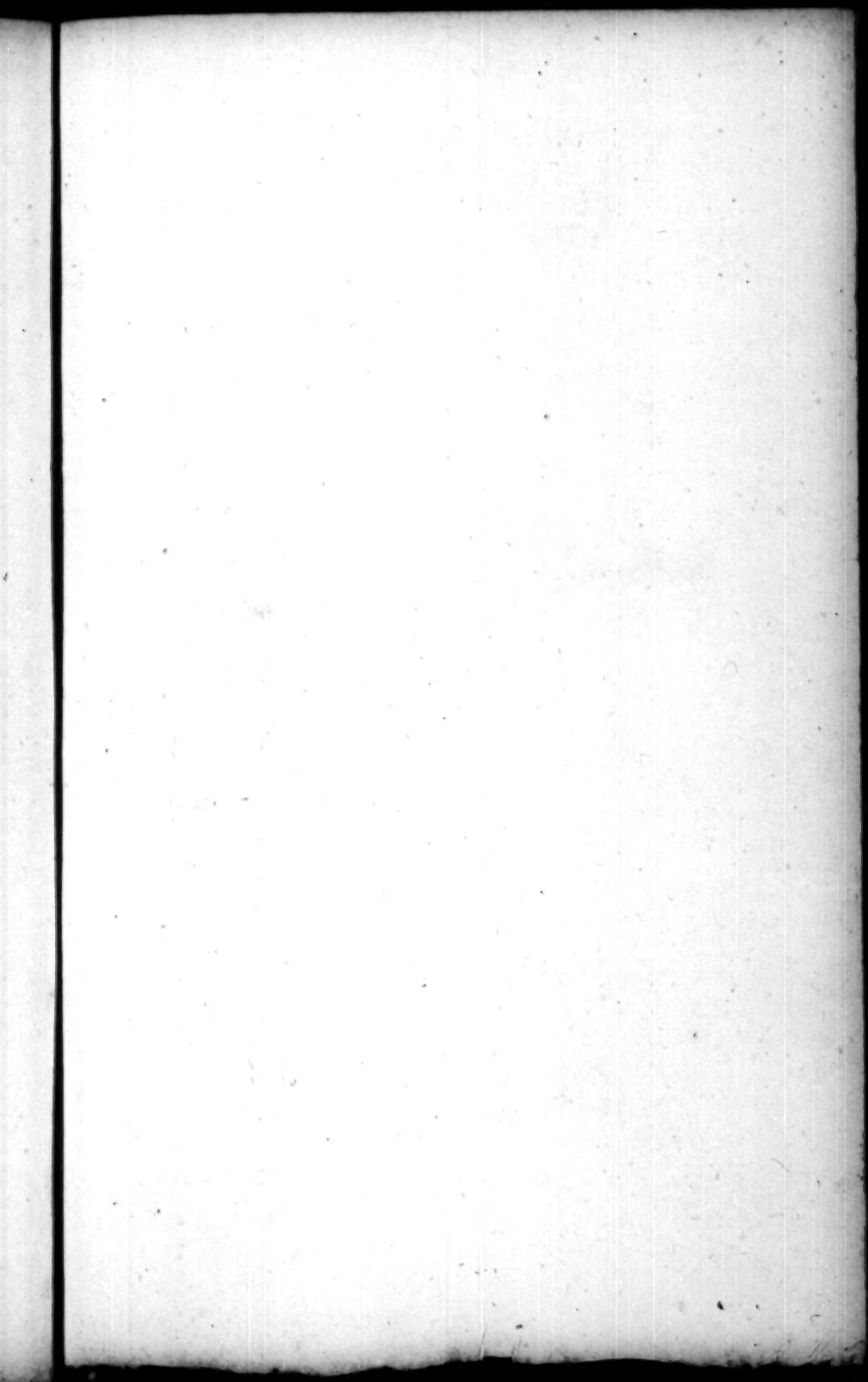
ford, in a faithful and virtuous union with a worthy man, who may direct your steps in safety and honour through this life, and partake with you the rewards of virtue in that which is to come. But, if this happy lot should be denied you, do not be afraid of a single life. A worthy woman is never destitute of valuable friends, who in a great measure supply to her the want of nearer connections. She can never be slighted or disesteemed, while her good temper and benevolence render her a blessing to her companions. Nay, she must be honoured by all persons of sense and virtue, for preferring the single state to an
union

union unworthy of her. The calamities of an unhappy marriage are so much greater than can befall a single person, that, the unmarried woman may find abundant argument to be contented with her condition, when pointed out to her by Providence. Whether married or single, if your first care is to please God, you will undoubtedly be a blessed creature;—"For that which he delights in *must be happy*."—How earnestly I wish you this happiness, you can never know, unless you could read the heart of

your truly affectionate.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





8314. a. 1.

LETTERS
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
MIND,
ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.
VOL. II.
